

Published: Feb. 20, 2013, *Kokomo Tribune* [Page: A1, jump to A5]

http://www.kokomotribune.com/news/local_news/article_60db576c-45b1-5c8f-8c3e-b6b617f8448d.html



Photo provided

'YOU ARE LOVED': Tim McCormick, 24, Greenwood, was one of two medics killed over the weekend in a two-vehicle collision in downtown Indianapolis.



Photo provided

'A COURAGEOUS MAN': Cody Medley, 22, Indianapolis, was one of two medics killed over the weekend in a two-vehicle collision in downtown Indianapolis.

Medics continue to inspire

Even in death, their legacies thrive.

By Rob Burgess

Tribune night editor

Indianapolis — Early Saturday morning, a two-car collision caused the first known on-the-job deaths of emergency services workers in Indianapolis' history.

Cody Medley, 22, Indianapolis, was initially seriously injured in the crash, while Timothy McCormick, 24, Greenwood, died at the scene. Medley died from his injuries Sunday.

"The cause of Saturday's crash remains under investigation," reported the Associated Press. "The 21-year-old woman who was driving the car that collided with the ambulance was released following a routine blood-alcohol test. Police said the ambulance had the right of way at the intersection where the collision occurred and both medics were wearing seatbelts."

The funerals for the two medics were held Tuesday. According to AP, public safety officials have planned a memorial for today for the pair to be held at Clowes Memorial Hall on Butler University's campus.

Over the weekend, Indianapolis Mayor Greg Ballard ordered all flags in the city to be flown at half-mast in honor of the pair's sacrifice.

"This is a terrible loss for Indianapolis EMS and our city. Our thoughts [and] prayers are with our public safety community [and] with the families," he wrote on his Twitter page Saturday. "When we are most in need, Indianapolis EMS takes care of us. Now it is our time as a community to take care of them."

'I wanted to throw up'

When asked how he felt upon learning of the weekend's tragic news, Scott Lakin, manager of emergency services at Community Howard Regional Health, said he had an immediate, visceral reaction.

"I wanted to throw up, actually," he said. "My immediate reactions were to be physically ill."

Lakin said in all his years he had never encountered such a situation.

"I started in the medical profession in 1977 as an EMT," he said. "Through my career as an EMT, firefighter and as an RN I've had situations where

people passed away, but not EMS-related.”

Sandra Herman, director of marketing and public relations at St. Joseph Hospital, described the situation as “shocking” as it hit particularly close to home.

“I can say that both as someone who works at a hospital and someone who has a brother who works [in public safety],” she said. “It is heartbreaking that people who are so dedicated to saving lives lost their lives in that pursuit. Our hearts go out to that young lady who hit them, too.”

Lakin said he was particularly concerned about the emotional well-being of his fellow workers, many of which were similarly struck by the news.

“I’ve been sensitive to it,” he said. “I manage four departments and one of them is the EMS folks. I had chaplains checking in on them in different shifts. There’s a reaction locally ... So far, the crews have been willing to talk about it. I have one person in the department who just started with us who knew one of the fellows who were killed. I checked on him.”

Herman said even though such machinery wouldn’t have necessarily made a difference in Saturday’s crash, ambulances at St. Joseph are equipped with special equipment to avoid such collisions with oncoming traffic.

“They do drive very defensively and certainly their priority is to save lives,” she said. “There’s also technology that can help. I know it didn’t play a role in that particular accident, but St. Joseph has technology to talk to traffic lights and they can turn them green for the ambulance and red for everyone else.”

Lakin said people who engage in such high-risk careers have to mentally steel themselves before, during and after intense job-relation situations.

“We get knives pulled on us, threats, people who are impaired,” he said. “These folks are highly trained. They do very good work. The community doesn’t know how good these people are.”

Lakin said he tries to keep in constant contact with those around him to help them cope with stressful scenes.

“You have a relationship with that staff so they’re able to come talk about any kind of issues whether that’s conditions, partners, whatever,” he said. “It’s very important for them to be able to call me. That’s the first step. I ride out on the ambulance periodically just to get a feeling what it’s like. The other thing they prepare themselves for is that this is a job where you don’t know. We didn’t have a locked down department when I started and

now that's a must. I think part of it is us preparing them, [another] piece is [being] open to hearing them and the other piece is them having to reach out."

Herman said she hopes Saturday's crash will provide drivers with some measure of caution going forward when confronted with emergency services workers.

"If they see the flashing lights, pull over," she said. "Let the lifesavers do their job."

Lakin said he hopes the public will do that and more.

"We need to appreciate the folks who do this work more," he said. "We need to thank them for the work that they do."

'A courageous man'

If someone's life can be judged by what others say about them after they're gone, Cody Medley did quite well. As the news of his death hit Facebook Sunday, his memorial page went online and quickly garnered 1,098 likes as of 10 p.m. Tuesday.

The page was flooded with memorials from those who knew him best, to those who didn't know him at all, but were inspired by his life of service.

"Cody was one of the most genuine and sincere people I have ever known," wrote Sarah Krist Flowers. "He is getting the hero's recognition he deserves for his drive, from a very young age, to help those in need in the community. My deepest sympathies to all his friends and family."

Many who knew him spoke of his character and goodwill towards others.

"He was the guy who always played with your kids, had a huge smile on his face," wrote Brianne Riley. "He loved his family and would do anything you asked of him. Great guy from a wonderful family. Will truly be missed."

Others turned to their faith to help them understand the tragedy.

"Praying hard for Cody's family and friends," wrote Marianne Harmas. "I knew only knew Cody for a short time but not only did he touch my life but my family's as well. He was a courageous man and I am grateful that God gave me the opportunity to meet him. My heart aches for all of those who were so close to him. May God help heal our hearts and never forget this amazing man!"

The laughter he brought to those around him was also a common topic amongst mourners.

“[I am] going to miss all the random things you do to make everyone smile or laugh,” wrote Tiffany Parker. “You always knew how to make everyone happy. You will be greatly missed by many! You were a great guy and terrific friend to all you will never be forgotten.”

Zack Bowling similarly remembered the good times they had together staying up way past their bed times.

“I never knew Cody that well,” he said. “He was an awesome friend though! I remember I stayed the night with him and we stayed up ‘till 7 in the morning playing games. Good times! Everyone who knew him and his family will most certainly be in my prayers.”

‘You are loved’

Even before his untimely death Saturday, McCormick was inspiring others online. In December 2011, he posted a video on YouTube as a part of the It Gets Better Project. Shot on what appears to be a laptop camera, the clip features a smiling McCormick clad in a black hat and shirt.

“My name is Tim McCormick,” he said into the camera. “I am an Eagle Scout, college student and professional EMT living in Indianapolis, Indiana. I am a gay American adult. Even though I ... probably never will meet you, I want you to know: that it gets better.”

The It Gets Better Project was started by syndicated columnist and podcaster Dan Savage and his husband Terry Miller “to show young LGBT people the levels of happiness, potential, and positivity their lives will reach – if they can just get through their teen years,” according to the official website. Since they began the project in September 2010, tens of thousands of videos like McCormick’s have been recorded, including entries from politicians like President Barack Obama and now-former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to celebrities like Sarah Silverman and Ellen DeGeneres. In a phone interview Tuesday, Savage said it was the death of another young man from Indiana, Billy Lucas, 15, Greensburg, which caused him and Terry to take action. In September 2010, Lucas hung himself after being harassed at school.

“Billy Lucas may or may not have been gay, but he was perceived to be gay by his peers and was bullied for being gay,” said Savage. “And you would read about someone like Billy Lucas and after the fact and wish you could have talked to that kid for five minutes ... With YouTube, Twitter and Facebook we now have the ability to bring that support group to that kid.

We don't have to wait for the kid's parents or community to provide that service for them."

McCormick shared that vision, and similarly sought to reach out the next generation.

"What I'm telling you is to keep your head up, keep your spirits high and keep working at whatever it is you're trying to accomplish with your life, because it will be worth it when all is said and done," said McCormick in his video. "If you don't have anything, keep searching. If you've lost what you used to have, keep trying. Life isn't a dress rehearsal. This is the real deal and it's your time to shine right now."

The clip has jumped from having fewer than 2,000 views Saturday to over 25,000 late Tuesday. Savage said he hadn't viewed McCormick's video prior to his death, but once he did see it, the clip moved him.

"In light of the way he died, it's heartbreaking to watch, but what a testament to leave behind," he said. "I was hearing from his friends all weekend through email and they were all speaking about his optimism and his good nature and his joy in life and that all shines through in the video. I don't think his death negates his video or the message of the project. Unfortunately, no one gets out of here alive."

In his video, McCormick implores viewers to apply the Golden Rule in their own lives, even when faced with strife.

“If anyone doubts you, prove them wrong. If anyone ridicules you, make them look bad, not you,” he said, pausing for a beat. “Actually, no, don’t make them look bad. You’re above that. You’re worth more than stooping down to their level. You are better than hatred. And you are loved.”

Savage said he sees McCormick’s life’s work as a direct pushback against the philosophies of another Hoosier who has recently gained national notoriety. According to the Associated Press, Diana Medley is a special education teacher in Sullivan who proposed holding a “traditional” prom which would exclude gay students. She told WTWO she believes being gay is a choice people make and that gays have no purpose in life.

“[McCormick] clearly had a purpose,” said Savage. “[McCormick] died serving the people of Indiana. What a rebuke to people who look at gay people and see nothing but sex and see nothing but sin. They can’t see the humanity and life and the love in our lives. The best monument to his life would be [Diana Medley] coming around, seeing the error of her ways and asking the forgiveness of her students who are LGBT, whose lives she described as ‘worthless.’”

Even over a year before the crash took his life, McCormick seemed to sense his video's ability to reach through time and space. McCormick ends the clip with a plea to share his words with anyone who might benefit from his message of hope.

"Please, pay it forward and pass this message along to someone who needs to hear it," he concludes. "You are special and beautiful just the way you are, whoever you are."

Rob Burgess, Tribune night editor, may be reached by calling 765-454-8577, via email at rob.burgess@kokomotribune.com or on Twitter at www.twitter.com/robaburg.

Would you like to know more?

[In Memory of Cody Medley \(Facebook page\)](#)

[In Memory of Timothy McCormick \(Facebook page\)](#)

[McCormick's It Gets Better Project video](#)

[It Gets Better Website](#)